

Delighted to See them.

Any more like that would
make quite a book

P

Previous page: A note from Prince Philip found with the originals

Kings, Queens & Empresses

Philip Neville

Philip L. Neville



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1

HMS “Drake”

1905

My first ship. The Admiral was Prince Louis of Battenberg, always known to all and sundry as P. L. He was very popular and much admired by everyone. Soon after I was commissioned we were visited by the King [Edward VII] who spent the night on board. The next morning the King and Mark Kerr, the Flag Captain, were up on the Shelter deck with me (as MK’s “doggy”) very new and very overawed in the august presence. I was presented to His Majesty, and Mark Kerr told him who I was. The King then said “I know your father very well, he taught me a lot of Bridge!”

Shortly afterwards we went to Gibraltar. P. L. went to Madrid for the Marriage of his niece Ena of Battenberg to King Alphonso. One of our Midshipmen was Ena’s brother who went to Madrid as well, he was Prince Alexander but known as Drino. He wasn’t very bright but we liked him and

he was a good messmate. When he returned from the wedding he was bubbling over with descriptions of the bomb attempt at the King and Queen driving home after the wedding. After an outburst from him of “My poor dear sister, splashed with blood!”, typical of us midshipman, and although we really wanted to hear about this we greeted him with “We don’t want to hear a word about the bomb!”.

A few months later the new King and Queen came on board at Malaga to lunch. The King continually poked fun at his wife at her condition, as she was shortly to produce her firstborn.

2

A visit to Bangkok in Jan. 1910 (letters to my mother)

We arrived at Bangkok in “King Alfred” last week having been 5 days at sea from Hong Kong. We anchored there out of sight of land, and it took 2 hours in the Picket boat to get to the shore and another hour by train to Bangkok. Many officers went up at once and were billeted on the residents. I spent two more days on board, it was sweltering hot but fortunately that makes no difference to me. We amused ourselves by catching or trying to catch sharks. I got away on Saturday and caught the train from Pak Nam for Bangkok at 9 am. We arrived after such a rickety train journey.

On arrival I didn't know where to go and felt a bit lost until I remembered that we were playing a cricket match somewhere, so I buttonholed an European who put me in a rickshaw and sent me off to the cricket ground. On arrival there I was saved! There were all our officers and the Bangkokians. I

was introduced to one Eric Lawson who was the Commissioner of Police. He at once asked me to stay with him, an invitation which I gratefully accepted. He introduced me all around and then at about 4pm we left in his car (everyone has one and he told me the King had sixty).

As soon as we arrived at his house we dashed off to see the Royal palace, a lovely building in beautiful Gardens where I was shown the sacred white elephants of Siam. They were a dirty white and rather measly looking brutes. After driving slowly to the Club for a drink or two we returned to his house. It was a big two storied one with no windows or doors to get any breeze through the house. My host gave me a lovely pair of Chinese white silk trousers, and that with a thin shirt was all we wore at supper - he said that was a universal dress unless there were ladies present. It was most cool and comfortable. We were waited on by Siamese boys - all the Siamese chew betel nut which give them black teeth and deep red lips.

During dinner I saw a lot of small boys running about the garden with small kerosene naked lights; I was told they were catching beetles which eat the precious roses, the boys get paid about 3d for every 1000 they catch! After dinner we put on Dinner Jackets and went to a Concert which was well

done and was a rowdy affair. I slept on a bed with a straw mattress for coolness and under an enormous mosquito net.

After I had dozed off I was exceedingly startled by an extraordinary noise over my head which sounded like “tuck too” repeated over and over. I shouted out to Lawson to ask what on earth it was. He came along to show me, turned on the light and there on the ceiling was a lizard about a foot long which was the cause of the noise, these lizards were very common and harmless.

The next morning I was taken around the surrounding country in the car, it was too hot to walk much. In the evening I was taken across the river in his boat to see the floating population. Lawson pointed out where a cremation was going on. The Siamese keep their dead from 7 to 14 years in charcoal underneath their houses. I witnessed a cremation in a bare and open temple. It had no walls and only pillars supporting the roof, in the middle was an enormous elevated bier decorated in gold. Smoke was coming out of this, the body being inside. All around the bier stood yellow-robed Buddhist priests chanting a woeful dirge, standing around were relations and friends who didn't seem to be the least interested in the ceremony, chatting to each other all of the time.

We went on down the river to see the most beautiful temple in Siam, passing the Siamese Navy consisting of three ships and also passing the State Barge where a crew of about 100 were singing a weird chant to keep time paddling. The temple was indescribably lovely inside, on the walls, from top to bottom was the life of Buddha, beautifully painted and preserved very well after so many hundreds of years. It was then getting dark and on the way back I was taken into a gambling den. These houses go on all day and night - my host told me that this particular one had been non-stop for the last 30 years. The gamblers sit around a circular mat on the floor and occasionally have rows and knife each other.

When we got back to the house I saw in the adjoining field about a dozen what looked like



Commissioner Lawsons House

huge mushrooms. Lawson told me that the priests at this time of the year had to do pilgrimages into the countryside visiting all the temples. They have nothing with them – only this umbrella which they let down the side of at night to form a tent. These priests were going to walk about 100 miles – they have no money and have to beg for their food all the time. At about 11pm they all came out and sat around a fire and said their prayers in an uncanny droning voice. This went on for about 2 hours.

I left by the early train the next morning and returned to the ship and shortly afterwards we sailed for Hong Kong.

3

Audience to the Emperor of Japan

October 1910

We drove to the Palace through lovely gardens and grounds. We were met at the main door by a posse of Chamberlains etc and were then walked along miles of passages to an antechamber. After some time we were summoned by other hangers-on and directed to stand outside a small and dark room. In this room the Emperor arrived however we could not see him as we were to the side of the door. At a given moment we went in in turn bowing incessantly (it seemed!) I then shook hands and he muttered a few words of welcome.

I noticed he wore white cotton gloves, a bit too large for him. He looked a funny little man of about 50 with a straggly grey beard and a red nose, which doesn't look well for the 'Son of Heaven' as he calls himself. As his subjects never see him, not even when he drives out - which is about once a year - it doesn't matter. They tell me he drinks and usually

is rather drunk at an Audience, but a great stickler for ceremony. He wore an undress military uniform which looked as if it had been thrown at him and stuck on, not surprising as his tailor is allowed a quick glance and then he makes his clothes - he is much too sacred to touch! We then staggered out backwards and went into another room where the Empress received us in the same way. She looked lost and had a vacant expression, quite nice looking and tiny. When I bowed I could just see the top of her head.

4

Lord Kitchener

*I stayed with Lord Kitchener at the Residency in
Cairo on two or three occasions in 1913.*

On arrival in Cairo we went straight to the Agency where we were met by Kitchener who was most affable. He looked puffy, and rather bloated looking about the face, the cast in one eye was most marked. He never goes outside the four walls of the Agency and takes no exercise except walks to the good Zoo on Sunday afternoon. His only interest is his "work". I was astonished on one occasion when he saw me in the garden and called me up. We walked up and down for a good hour and he talked so very interestingly all about his campaigns. I wished I could have taken it down in shorthand!

Another time we took Prince Albert [later King George VI] with us to stay with Kitchener. He was a midshipman on the "Collingwood" at the time and Kitchener gave a Ball for him at the Agency. Kitchener hated these shows and disappeared at about 9pm. Prince Albert and I ended up hiding



His Highness the Sultan

requests the honour of the Company of

Commander P.L. Neville

at Dinner at Kibweni Palace

on Sunday the 23rd of August at 8 p.m.

*R.L.V.P. to:
Private Secretary,
The Palace.*

(Mess uniform, or white mess jacket, with miniature decorations)

away in my bedroom with beer and sandwiches. The next morning we gave everyone the slip and went off together to the Pyramids and other sights in Cairo. He hated those functions, he having to mind his Ps and Qs all the time and lots of ogling females saying; “Do you know what the Prince said to me”.

At Official Dinner parties given by Kitchener the whole dinner service was of gold - the history being that after many military and other successes he was given the Freedom of many cities and towns throughout the land. Instead of the usual casket, always ugly and useless, the cunning and mercenary Kitchener ordered from each city a piece of gold plate required to make up the set - a magnificent result.

5

Vignette of the Balkan War

Salonika 1912

When the Greek and Bulgarian Armies were advancing on Salonika, the Naval C in C (whose Flag Lieutenant I was) was ordered with two Destroyers to Salonika to watch over British interests. On arrival we heard desultory firing on the outskirts of the Town and shortly afterwards the Greek Army under the command of the Crown Prince Constantine entered the Town; thus triumphantly beating the Bulgars to it - they came in a few hours later.

The Chief of Staff [Adm. Richard Phillimore] and I landed and went to the Town Hall and were immediately ushered in to be received by the Crown Prince, much to the annoyance of the many officials who thought that they were more important and should have had priority. The Crown Prince was supported by his brothers Princes Andrew, Nicholas and Christopher. They were all delighted that they

had seen off the Bulgars and would “do everything” to protect British Nationals etc.

The following morning I happened to be on deck at about 7am and idly looking at a small shore boat coming alongside. I noticed two Greek officers in it and when they came up the gangway I saw to my astonishment they were Princes Andrew and Christopher who only wanted a bath! After complying with their wishes and having thrown in a good breakfast to boot they went ashore again in the C in C's barge this time!

Later on in the morning I was sent ashore by the C in C with letters etc. I first went to the Villa where the Greek Royalties were staying. I was somewhat delayed by a Regiment of Bulgarian troops entering the Town. They were a rubbly lot of scallywags, quite filthy and stank to high heaven.

On arrival at the Villa an A.D.C. told me that the King (George) had arrived and I was to stay to lunch. It was a very cheerful affair, the King being in excellent form, Princesses Andrew and Nicholas who had been nursing were also present. Soon after lunch I went on in a fiacre to take a message to Prince Boris, who was C in C, of the Bulgarian Army. At his Villa I met with a very different reception - to begin with on my way there I was shot at by a trigger-happy and ill-disciplined Bulgar soldier. On arrival



PALAIS ROYAL.

Par ordre de Sa Majesté
le Roi, le Maréchal de la
Cour a l'honneur d'inviter
Le Lieutenant Neville,
Aide-de-Camp de l'Amiral
Commandant en chef de la
flotte de Sa Majesté Britannique
dans la Méditerranée, à dîner
à Tatroj le 18/31. a. c. à 12 h $\frac{3}{4}$

En petite tenue. (Sans épée).

at the Villa I was refused admittance by two dirty soldiers who dropped their rifles across the gate thus barring my way - an odd reception considering I was in my best uniform! I then attracted the attention of some sort of A.D.C. in the garden. He told me that Prince Boris was busy - I replied that I didn't in the least want to see him, expressed surprise at my rude reception, gave him the message, got back in my cab, drove to the landing stage and returned to the ship.

The following year I had a lunch with the King. The first course was oysters, I was horrified as I loathe them. The situation was saved by George Ward Price - the newspaper correspondent who was also lunching - turning to the King and saying: "I should respectfully advise Your Majesty not to touch those oysters as I am almost sure they were grown by the main drain which discharges into the harbour". "Take them away" replied the King, "I don't want to die from eating oysters especially now when I am just celebrating my fifty years on the Throne".

A few days later he was assassinated.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

ATHENS, MARCH 25.

The Royal yacht *Amphitrite*, bearing the body of the late King, accompanied by all the Royal family, will arrive at the Piræus to-morrow afternoon. The date of the funeral has been fixed for Wednesday, April 2, in order to give time for the foreign missions to arrive.

The Premier, M. Venezelos, returned to Athens this morning.

King George will be represented at the funeral of the King of the Hellenes by a special mission headed by Prince Alexander of Teck. The *personnel* of the mission has not yet been announced, but it is probable that the Prince will be accompanied by naval and military officers of high rank. Queen Alexandra will not attend her brother's funeral in person, but will be represented by Sir Francis Elliot, the British Minister at Athens.

Reuter's Agency announces that the Emperor Francis Joseph will be represented at the funeral by Baron de Burian, a former Minister of Finance. An Austro-Hungarian warship will accompany the remains of the late King of Greece from Salonika to the Piræus with the warships of other Powers.

The French cruisers *Edgar Quinet* and *Jules Ferry* have received orders to leave Toulon for the Piræus to take part in the funeral celebrations.

The Times of London
March 26, 1913

6

Funeral of George, King of Greece

We anchored in Salamis Bay, and the next day we went up to Athens where we remained until after the funeral. We stayed with the Minister, Sir Francis Elliot - a very nice man whose wife was a bit heavy on hand.

We went to the station in full dress to meet Prince Alexander of Teck, who represented the King. Sir Berkeley Moynihan had been put on his staff for the funeral - much to Prince Alexander's indignation, "He is only a Major in the Army", he said. After taking him to his Hotel, we went by car to leave cards and wrote our names in the books of about 18 or 20 Foreign Royalties who have arrived for the funeral.

The next day we donned full dress and drove to the Cathedral taking an enormous wreath "From the British Navy" (incidentally it cost £39). The cathedral was crammed with wreaths, I saw one of

a circle of about 5 feet diameter and a foot thick of massed violets. In the choir surrounded by candles was the coffin, tilted up, the Kings face exposed. We filed past, deposited the wreath and left.

We arrived at the Cathedral at 9.30am the following day and took up our positions and could see everything. Everyone had to stand, there was no room for any chairs. There were 70 Bishops from all over Greece and Macedonia, garbed in beautiful vestments. All the Royalties arrived and stood together, Teck in his Life Guards uniform eclipsed the lot. On the arrival of the King and Queen the service started. With the exception of the sermon the service was entirely musical, the singing quite exquisite and all unaccompanied. The choir was hidden, the whole effect being most impressive – one heard soft in the minor, then gradually becoming crescendo in the major and dying away again in the minor.

The Service over we formed up for the Procession outside. It was a slow march for $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to the station. The road was lined by Greek troops that had arrived that day from Janina which they had just captured, they were dirty and travel-stained armed with Turkish rifles, it was really most effective. We arrived at the station and saw the German Naval Guard of Honour had fallen in opposite the Gate,



just at that moment our Naval Guard of Honour arrived and was very neatly slipped in just in front of the Germans. Ernest Wigram, our Commander, pretended he hadn't done it on purpose when I saw him afterwards!

Only the immediate Royalties went on by train to Tatoi where the late King was buried. We returned to the ship and the next day Prince Alexander Teck and co. (Lords Kenyon and Menzies) came to lunch on board. Shortly afterwards they left to go back by train to England, and we were off to Malta.

7

Visit to the Sultan of Turkey

(extract from a letter)

The really wonderful affair was our Banquet with the Sultan at the Yildiz Palace - full of pomp and glory, very like a finale in a gorgeous musical comedy. White marble, gold and brilliantly lit, the stairs were lined by soldiers in white astrakhan fezzes and white and red uniforms. One half expected a lovely musical comedy star come waltzing down the stairs! But the Sultan!! He looked like an unpleasant and rather disgusting imbecile. This sketch is his back view and no exaggeration.

We dined sumptuously off gold plate, with a footman behind each chair. The china handle-less coffee cups were in gold filigree containers studded with precious stones. After dinner we sat out in an ante room and an equerry came in, to give the Sultan a telegram. This telegram announced the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo.

Add to my account of visit to Constantinople in June 1914 that the Sultan presented to the ship many thousands of Turkish cigarettes. The men had no use for them as they always smoked stinkers. Some taken up by few of us.



L'ordre de Sa Majesté Impériale le Sultan
le Grand Maître des Cérémonies a l'honneur d'inviter

Monsieur le Lieutenant Neille

de l'Etat-Major de Son Excellence l'Amiral Neille,
à dîner au Palais de Yildiz,

le Dimanche 28 Juin 1914, à 8 heures.

EN UNIFORME

Seigneur de répondre à la Grande Maîtrise des Cérémonies.

8

Visit to Empress Marie of Russia Yalta 1918

I was serving on the “Canterbury” at Harwich when we received orders to sail for Malta. A fast light Cruiser was required for shadowing the “Goeben” who was expected to break out of the Dardanelles.

On arrival there we learned that the Turkish armistice had taken place and we then joined up with the Combined Fleets to demonstrate before Constantinople. We were then detached and ordered up to the Crimea; the first British man-o-war to go there since the Crimean war of 1854. A German naval officer with knowledge of the minefields piloted us into Sevastopol. After a few days there I was sent for by my Captain and told to go to Yalta by car to see the Empress and, if possible, persuade her to leave the country for Italy and eventually England.

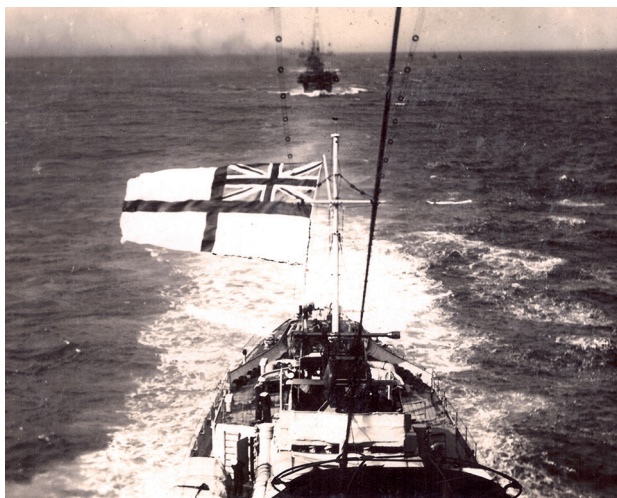
I therefore ordered a car - a large Mercedes with a German driver, and left the next morning armed with



a revolver, fresh white bread and a loving message from the Empress's sister, Queen Alexandra. I also took an able seaman as bodyguard.

The car was an open one and the weather very cold and when we were crossing the plain of Balaclava we ran into a blizzard. We descended into Yalta by a series of hairpin bends, skillfully negotiated on the icy roads by my driver. On arrival at the Villa in which the Empress was living we were met by a charming old Admiral who greeted me warmly.

He left almost at once and soon came back to tell me that the Empress would see me, explaining that she had a chill and was upstairs. Up I went and to my utter astonishment was ushered into a smallish bedroom wherein was a large bed in which reclined Her Imperial Majesty. I was uncertain as to the etiquette of greeting an Empress in bed, but she quickly put me at my ease and expressed her delight at, after four years, meeting an Englishman and a Naval officer at that. There were two things that I noticed: she was wearing necklaces of huge pearls under her dressing-gown, and that the large window was stuffed around its edges with travelling rugs to keep out the drafts. Meanwhile I had produced the message from Queen Alexandra, the first news she had had from her sister since the Russian Revolution. To my horror she burst into tears on



The Harwich Force in 1918

The South harbour at Sevastopol



reading it - but soon recovered and we talked away. I tried to emphasize how necessary it was for her to leave Russia, she was quite adamant in her refusal to do this saying that her place was in Russia as long as her son, the Tsar, was still alive; she refused to believe that, at that time, he, along with his family, had been murdered (It was not until a later date that she consented to go, and was evacuated in H.M.S. "Marlborough"). The Empress told me how dreadfully she had been treated by the Bolsheviks - even to the extent of a filthy old peasant woman staying in her room night and day. I was taken away by the Admiral to go down to lunch.

Lunch was a frugal meal, somewhat enhanced by the white bread which I had brought and the Imperial Vodka with which I was regaled. After lunch I was taken back to the Empress to bid her farewell. She asked me if I could get her any cold cream! (I remembered that I had a half-used pot which I used after shaving - this I eventually sent her). After bidding her farewell I went downstairs where I found my able seaman and the German driver on a settee in the hall with their heads on each other's shoulder fast asleep! My Admiral friend informed me that there were some women outside who wanted to see me. I was completely non plussed at this so out I went - and there, standing in the snow,

were some 10 to 15 women who started bombarding me with questions. They were all English governesses who had been evacuated from Petrograd it being the fashion among the aristocracy to employ English women. Having to the best of my ability answered their questions as to who had won the war, what was I doing there etc etc, they had had no war news for years. I then got into the car and had an uneventful drive back to Sevastopol.

9

Wedding of Princess Elizabeth to the Duke of Edinburgh (letters to my mother)

Whilst still more or less fresh in my memory I think you would like to read this short account of the Royal wedding and my doings during that week. I arrived at London on Sunday night, the 16th November as I was in attendance at St James' Palace the next day for Their Majesty's party to view the presents. I arrived at St James' early so as to have a private view before the crowd (2,500 of them) got there. They were quite wonderful but impossible to really see in under a week. The most outstanding gifts were the jewels - quite magnificent and so well displayed in glass cases. The rooms swarmed with detectives, there was no chance of a theft.

I had one room to look after and I and my staff (one young man from the Lord Chamberlain's office and a couple of detectives) turned into a couple of shop walkers pushing people along to the next room etc. One old lady asked me where the "tea lounge"

was!

On Thursday I did this all over again. Eleanor augmenting the party. When the Royalties came through my room I took the opportunity of presenting her to Princess Elizabeth and the Queen.

On Thursday evening there was an “Evening Party” at Buckingham Palace. I had to be there at nine o’clock and found all the Drawing rooms, Galleries, Ball rooms, etc: looking really beautiful, having been done up since the war and the flowers superb. There were about a thousand guests all in their best dress with orders, decorations, tiaras & diamonds. It was really back to the old pre-war shows, even to flowing champagne and caviar sandwiches. I did myself well in the latter comestibles and drinks, having many years to make up! It was nearly 2am before I returned to my hotel, although the party was supposed to end at midnight - everyone was so full of good spirits and Champagne that it was difficult to turn them out.

On Friday I had to be in the Abbey at 3.30pm for rehearsals. My job was to meet and look after my namesake Philip, the bridegroom, and see him safely to his seat. When the King and Queen arrived I detached Philip from them and took him along to give him his drill. We then sat down and talked whilst the remaining Royalties practiced processing etc.

I took him along into where he was to sign the register (Edward the Confessor's Chapel) and finding the Coronation Chair there, we both sat in it, hoping that Her Majesty would not walk in. We came out just as the King and Princesses arrived at the Sacrarium, where they had an argument as to which side the bridegroom should be going away, my opinion wasn't asked! There was an awful crowd outside the Abbey when I left with Joe Airlie [the Lord Chamberlain] - we got a couple of stalwart police to get us through the crowd.

After taking Eleanor to the theatre we returned to the Goring for supper and found the Dutch and Greek Royal hangers-on still dining, all very rollicking and one or two very drunk! A good party spirit which was good for our staid Hotel.

On the Wedding morning Eleanor and I left early for the Abbey as not to miss anything. We drove up to Hyde Park Corner and having a special pass we were waved into Constitution Hill, down the Processional Route to the Abbey. I told the driver to go slowly so we could get a good look at the crowds and troops. Everyone was very cheerful and jolly in spite of many having spent the night on the roadside.

We entered the Abbey by Poets Corner. Having put Eleanor in her seat, I had one or two things to do then went with the Precentor and a Beadle to

meet Prince P. I met him outside and we chatted together with his Best man who was Milford Haven. He brought with him some papers and his hair brush so I summoned a delighted Boy Scout to take them back to the Palace. We had about ten minutes to wait as the Prince said that he wasn't going in until the fanfares sounded to announce the Bride's arrival. I protested mildly but he assured me that he had consulted the King about it and that he had approved so I did likewise, the only snag being that the Precentor had to be at the west end to process with the Bride. We dismissed him and his Beadle and I roped in another Abbey official in his stead. On the Fanfares sounding we slowly processed to his seat and with mutual bows I left him to his fate.

The Service was beautiful, both formal and informal and the music superb. I left my seat in the Transept and sneaked down the South aisle to the west door in order to give Philip his cap as he got into the Coach. I wanted to make certain he got it and also have the fun of seeing the Processions. We returned to the Hotel after the Processions had left - the traffic arrangements were very good and we had no difficulty in getting home.

10

Funeral of King George VI

(letters to my mother)

Just back from Victoria having seen off my Grand Duchess and her Consort. I was lucky to be given her to look after. I couldn't have wished to have had a more charming, dignified and good looking person to take about. Her husband, Prince Felix, was a grand chap, a keen sportsman and easy to get on with. They unofficially brought a very nice daughter; I didn't have to bother about her as she was being looked after by an Embassy underling.

I came up on Tuesday and went to have talks with the Earl Marshall, Lord Chamberlain etc. I was lucky in having Fitzgerald, a Colonel of the Irish Guards to assist me, he was most efficient and helpful. I sent him to Dover to meet T.R.H. and I met them on red carpets and press flashlights at Victoria, I had 4 Rolls-Royce's for the party, my car for T.R.H. had a royal crown stuck up on top. I took them to the Dorchester where they had a suite. They

had a helpful staff, but a small snag was that they had a sweet elderly Lady-in-waiting who was always getting lost, so delaying matters till we collected her again. Yesterday I took them to Buckingham Palace where I deposited the Grand Duchess with the other Royal Ladies who were going in carriages. I then took Prince Felix on to Westminster put him in his place in the Procession then went to my own.

We processed from Westminster to Paddington - 2¾ hours. At the Marble Arch I seemed to have been walking for weeks and could it ever end! We were ushered into a special train at Paddington and provided with whisky, coffee and sandwiches, all most welcome.

We got to Windsor very speedily and re-formed up again and waited for the Coffin having arrived before it. We then had a ½ hour procession via the Castle to St. George's Chapel. My colleagues and I followed it in to the chapel. It was most satisfactory to sail past Field Marshals and Admirals of the Fleet, leaving them standing on the steps as The Queen had insisted on the Household staff being present at the ceremony. The Service was simple, impressive and beautiful. Afterwards I returned to the Station which was stiff with Royalty. With some difficulty I found my Party and returned to London, a good tea was provided on the train. I was relieved to be met at

Paddington by my tame detective who knew where our car was so I could collect T.R.H. and bring them home again.

They had to dine with the Queen and tea with Queen Mary - that didn't touch me as all the parties were unofficial. I collected them at 8am and saw them off by train and boat. They seemed genuinely grateful for all I did for them but perhaps that was Royal tact.

I took Eleanor on Thursday night to see the Lying in State. I had special passes to go in through another Entrance avoiding the Public queue. It was really most impressive and all so beautifully arranged the dim light, the dead silence etc. - the populace were obviously much moved.

11

Queen Mary's Funeral

(letters to my mother)

I had a very interesting time with my Prince Felix. I collected him from Dover, we were met in London by Ministers etc. then took him to Claridge's where I briefed him for all the Ceremonies. I then took him to see the Lying in State at Westminster Hall.

My large car, complete with Crown on the top, came for me the next morning at 8.45am and I went to Claridge's to pick up Felix and motor him down to Windsor, where I deposited him at the Deanery. We then went into St. Georges for the Service, it was quite lovely and the singing was exquisite. I went back to the Deanery and got thoroughly mixed up with all the Royalties who were having elevenses. I talked to King Baudouin among others, a nice but very shy young man. Ex-King Umberto was there and everyone seemed to like him. We went on to the Castle where all the Royalties lunched with the Queen. I retired to a Drawing Room where we

drank Sherry with the Household before going into a sumptuous lunch, presided over by the Duchess of Devonshire - the new Mistress of the Robes.

After coffee a flunkey came in to tell me the Prince was ready to go, so I dashed along through the Private Apartments bargaining through various Royalties, grabbed my cap and sword from a Footman and leapt into the car only just in time, Prince Philip thought it all a huge joke and roared at seeing me in such a panic! Later I took H.R.H. down to London Airport to return home by air, we went in by a special entrance to the V.I.P. Lounge and found several other Royalties waiting for their respective planes. Our Sabena was already drawn up outside so, after coffee, I bade a fond farewell and returned with the Minister.

I returned home in the evening rather exhausted, the continual talking rather a strain especially in the train where the rattling made it hard to concentrate.

12

Queen Elizabeth's Coronation

(letters to my mother)

I'm just run off my legs with endless jobs, appointments etc, etc. I went to Dover yesterday to meet my Prince Axel of Denmark and his wife. I'm lucky as they are both quite charming and no bother whatever. On arrival in London we were met by the Duke of Edinburgh and drove to the Palace. The crowds were very bad. We went straight to their suite where I then tried to brief them on their voluminous programme with continuous interruptions by the Queen and the Duke who thought my efforts at briefing rather a joke, anyhow it was all good fun.

In the evening I took them to a Reception given by the Government at the National Gallery and then on to Claridge's to drink with Prince Bertil of Sweden and the newlywed young Grand Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg. We had an amusing evening, which I much enjoyed - I got to bed at 1.30am rather exhausted.

Last night when we were driving to the National Gallery we were nearly mobbed by the crowds in spite of a Mounted Policeman in front and a motorbike one on either side. The crowds were all very good tempered - Axel said "I wonder who the hell they think we are?", I replied that the crowd had no idea and that they were only interested in a Royal car with dressed up occupants.

I rehearsed last week at the Abbey as I was leading the Procession of the Royal aunts: The Princess Royal and Duchesses of Gloucester and Kent which all went off well. Axel's suite - an A.D.C. and a Lady in Waiting have been living here at the Goring, a matter I arranged months ago. On Sunday I took them to a preview film of the "Beggar's Opera" - Lawrence Olivier made a charming little speech at the end of it.

On Tuesday (Coronation Day) I took the Axels to the Abbey, collecting them from the Palace at 9am, a very gentlemanly hour. We slowly drove down the Processional Route, what a wonderful sight the crowds were! The most impressive were the 30,000 schoolchildren on the Embankment. The Service in the Abbey I just can't begin to describe it was just wonderful, The Queen did her part so well she was completely calm and cool the whole time, I was just behind the Royal Box so got a good view of it all.

I went to lunch afterwards at Ashburnham House and got back to the Goring about 5pm. The boys arrived soon after having enjoyed their view from the household stand in the Mall. I gave them a huge tea and off they went with Miss Hallett and Matron back to school.

On the Thursday Axel had a night off and gave a big Dinner Party at the Savoy - quite informal. Among his guests were ex-King Michael of Romania and his nice but shy wife - the Luxembourg couple and several other Princelings - an amusing and interesting party which broke up at about 1.30am.

The Reception at the Palace the next night was a gorgeous spectacle - such uniforms, jewels, dresses etc. some of them quite fantastic. The Queen of Tonga has throughout taken the public's fancy - large and jolly - she was out to have a good time and obviously had it. I took the Axels to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Garden Party at Lambeth Palace, where we only 'put in an appearance'. The Archbishop did his stuff so well in the Abbey he deserved our coming to his Party - such a surprisingly large garden there but rather ill-kept. The official visit being over on Saturday, T.R.H. shifted to the Embassy and we all went to an informal and pleasant Dinner Party there last night.

I always went to the Palace every morning to

arrange the day's work, and I always had a cheerful time with them. I was endlessly busy arranging cars, times of arrival and leaving at functions, police and detective matters, suite matters, servant matters etc. I was continually bumping into various Royalties including the Queen's children who played a lot in the corridors.

My duties end this afternoon at Liverpool Street where I see the Axel's off for Harwich to catch the steamer for their return to Denmark. I have several things to finish up and another Reception at Buckingham Palace on Friday after which I go home and shan't be sorry either!

